

Board of Trustees
Fernie Public Library Association
PO Box 448
Fernie, BC
V0B1M0

16 September 2019

Attention: Minister Fleming

Dear Minister Fleming:

As you know, provincial funding for public libraries in British Columbia has not increased for the past decade. We, the trustees of the Fernie Heritage Library, see this year as a great opportunity for the BC government to pledge 20 Million in 2020 to support the important work libraries are doing to make our communities better places to live.

Eric Klineberg, author of a book called *Palaces for the People* wrote about social infrastructure, suggesting it is the glue that binds communities together. It is just as real as the infrastructure for water, power, or communications, although it's often harder to see. According to Klineberg, "When we invest in social infrastructures, such as libraries, we reap all kinds of benefits. We become more likely to interact with people around us and connected to the broader public." Libraries across BC provide such benefits as making life more affordable, creating a strong sustainable economy, and furthering Reconciliation and the TRC Calls to Action.

Our own Fernie Heritage Library, in the Southeast Kootenays, is a dynamic place. The past year at our library was one of the busiest to date, with increased services and regular programming for seniors, school groups, and community partners. Participation in nearly all programs and service showed increases ranging from 3 percent to 56 percent year over year. Circulation and interlibrary loan numbers also increased, as did the use of online data-bases. Our programming and services contribute much to the affordability of our town.

Individuals and families save hard earned dollars when they use the library. Our library provides after school care and free homework help for students. It also offers free or affordable printing. Our library contributes to a strong sustainable economy by offering supports such as volunteer income tax help and free internet usage. Library staff provide basic IT skills training to patrons for popular computer applications. They also help job seekers by offering workshops on how to design and write resumes, cover letters, and present during interviews. Library patrons have access to not only books, but information through data bases, such as auto-repair and legal advice. Furthermore, the library supports tourism in our town by hosting events such as the Children's Summer Festival.

BC Libraries are an avenue toward reconciliation with Indigenous citizens. Many libraries, including our own, facilitate events which build understanding and respect. The Fernie Heritage Library has a committee in place to help First Nations feel more comfortable in the library and our staff have worked hard to indigenize the library collection.

Our library supports our community in so many ways, from promoting literacy, to providing a warm safe space for teens to hangout on a winter's day. The last decade has brought radical reinvention and our library is now embarking on the task of creating a tech enabled space which, among other things, will provide a station for digitalization of materials and a 3D printer. Our local staff is uniquely positioned to develop programming that works for our community. For example, this spring our library hosted the first ever "Not for Kids Social: A Registration Fair for Grown-Ups" which was an event aimed at connecting new and long time Fernie residents with various clubs and service groups. This event was incredibly well attended.

Libraries across BC support their communities and improve the lives of BC citizens. The library is a community asset we cannot afford to lose. For this reason, we, the trustees of the Fernie Heritage Library, are adding our voices to the call for increased library funding. Please consider making 2020 the year for a meaningful increase.

Sincerely,



Karla Germaine
Chairperson, Board of Trustees
Fernie Public Library Association

For and on behalf of the Board of Trustees
Fernie Public Library Association